

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

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TAGS: PLAB, SHUM, SF, UK, GW
SUBJECT: LABOR REFORM-TRAVELS OF NIC WIEHAHN

REF: 77 JOHANNESBURG A-156

1. SUMMARY: LABOR COMMISSIONER WIEHAHN WILL BE TRAVELLING TO
EUROPE SHORTLY AS PART OF A SAG CAMPAIGN TO NEUTRALIZE GROWING
DEMANDS FOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND BUSINESS WITHDRAWAL. HE IS
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EXPECTED TO HOLD OUT THE PROMISE OF SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN
LABOR LEGISLATION WHICH WILL NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL THE LATTER
PART OF THIS YEAR. WHILE IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME CHANGES WILL
OCCUR WHICH MAY MAKE THE LIFE OF THE URBAN BLACK WORKER LESS
BURDENSOME, IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT THE BASIC STRUCTURES OF
SEPARATE (PLURAL) DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUX CONTROL WILL BE
FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERED. STATUTORY JOB RESERVATION MAY GO BUT

THE FUTURE OF TRADE UNIONISM FOR WHITES, AS WELL AS BLACKS IS UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING A MEETING ON MARCH 10, NAAS STEENKAMP OF THE GENERAL MINING CORPORATION, WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LABOR LEGISLATION, CONFIRMED RUMORS WHICH HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING TO THE EFFECT THE COMMISSION WILL NOT MAKE AN INTERIM REPORT TO THE CURRENT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESENT PLANS, THE COMMISSION WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE ORAL EVIDENCE UNTIL THE END OF MARCH, AFTER WHICH CHAIRMAN NIC WIEHAHN WILL DEPART FOR A TWO-WEEK TRIP TO THE UNITED KINGDOM AND GERMANY. WIEHAHN WILL BE TRAVELLING AT THE REQUEST OF MINISTER OF LABOR FANNIE BOTHA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY FOR SENDING TOP OFFICIALS ABROAD TO COUNTER INCREASING DEMANDS FOR SANCTIONS AND BUSINESS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE REPUBLIC. BRITISH LAB ATT VOSE INDICATES THAT WIEHAHN HAS SOUTHTGT A MEETING IN LONCON WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN. WIEHAHN WILL TRY TO CONVINCE GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND LABOR LEADERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE FEDERAL REPOUBLIC OF GERMANY THAT HIS AND THE RIEKERT COMMISSION ON MANPOWER, WILL RECOMMEND SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN S.A. LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL WORKERS.

4. COMMENT: THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION IS SCHEDULED TO RESUME ITS DELIBERATIONS IN MID-APRIL FOLLOWING WIEHAHN'S RETURN. INFORMED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE CONFLICTING VIEWS OF VARIOUS COMMISSION MEMBERS, WHICH HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY ENTRENCHED DURING THE PAST TEN MONTHS, WILL EMERGE AT THAT TIME. WIEHAHN WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME RECONCILING, FOR EXAMPLE, MANAGEMENT ATTITUDES, SOME OF WHICH FAVOR THE ELIMINATION OF JOB RESERVATION AND THE SUBSTITUTION OF PLANT COUNCILS FOR TRADE UNIONS, WITH THOSE OF LABOR LEADERS WHO ARE SPLIT ON THE ISSUE OF BLACK TRADE UNION RECOGNITION BUT OBVIOUSLY DO NOT WANT TO SEE TRADE UNIONISM FURTHER WEAKENED. THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION WILL PROBABLY NOT BE KNOWN UNITL OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER.

5. RIEKERT, WHO IS DUE TO RETIRE IN AUGUST, PLANS TO COMPLETE HIS REVIEW OF ALL LAWS AFFECTING URBAN BLACKS BEFORE THEN. WHILE RIEKERT IS CONCERNED TO "APPLY ECONOMIC COMMON SENSE TO THE URBAN BLACK LABOR MARKET", HE IS UNLIKELY TO CHALLENGE THE BROAD PRINCIPLES OF PRESENT POLICY, ESPECIALLY INFLUX CONTROL. HE MAY RECOMMEND IMPROVEMENTS IN HOUSING REGULATIONS, LABOR RECRUITMENT, AND TRADING RIGHTS WHICH COULD MAKE THE LIFE OF URBAN BLACKS LESS BURDENSOME, BUT AS LONG AS BLACKS ARE RESTRICTED IN WHERE THEY CAN WORK AND RESIDE AND INCREASINGLY PREVENTED FROM HAVING THEIR FAMILIES WITH THEM, SOUTH AFRICA WILL STILL BE A LONG WAY FROM BEING ABLE TO UTILIZE ITS MANPOWER ON A NON-DISCRIMINATORY

BASIS.
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